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RELIGION, STATE & SOCIETY

Volume 33 Number 2 June 2005

| | |
|--|-----|
| Editorial | 83 |
| Notes on Contributors | 85 |
| Religion in China in the Twenty-first Century: Some Scenarios KIM-KWONG CHAN | 87 |
| If Allah Wills It: Integration, Isolation and Muslim Authenticity in Yunnan Province in China SUSAN MCCARTHY | 121 |
| Political Islam and Social Movement Theory: The Case of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan EMMANUEL KARAGIANNIS | 137 |
| Church-State Relations in Russia: Orthodoxy and Federation Law, 1990– 2004 JOHN D. BASIL | 151 |
| Religion and Politics: Religious Values in the Polish Public Square since 1989 STANISLAW BURDZIEJ | 165 |
| Book Reviews | 175 |

Editorial

The relationship between President Putin's government and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) is a complex one. The government does not want to see the development of a closer relationship between the state and the ROC; this is evident from the slow progress of attempts to establish a legal 'traditional religion' status which would allocate prime position to the Moscow Patriarchate. Yet since the late 1990s, with the passage of the new more restrictive religion law in 1997 as a landmark, pressure for a closer rapprochement between the state and the ROC has been growing in the Duma. In late 2003 the legal case against the art exhibition 'Ostorozhno, religiya!' ('Danger, religion!') for offending the sensibilities of Orthodox believers was brought at the request of 256 members of the Duma, where pro-Orthodoxy factions are gaining increasing representation. In his article in this issue of RSS John Basil surveys the process of Russian legislation in relation to Orthodoxy over the last fifteen years, asking whether a closer relationship will indeed develop between the Russian federal government and the ROC, and noting the conservative pressure aiming to establish a stronger legal place for the Orthodox Church as a moral and patriotic standard of Russian life.

The entry of Poland into the European Union, the continuing debate about explicit references to Christianity in the EU Constitution, and now the death of Pope John Paul II have all thrown up similar questions about the church-state climate in Poland. In his article in this issue Stanislaw Burdziej brings some of the experiences and conclusions from the American experience of the presence of religion in the public arena to bear on the situation in postcommunist Poland; his central question is whether Poland is now moving towards the 'value-free' model of the state, that is of a public square free of any reference to religious values, or whether it is experiencing, and will continue to experience, a return of religion into politics, for example in the form of growing support for parties of the religious right.

The change of government in Kyrgyzstan in March this year has been compared with recent peaceful 'revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine. One unanswered question so far is what effect the upheavals in Kyrgyzstan will have on the level of radical religious activity there and more widely in former Soviet Central Asia – and specifically on Hizb ut-Tahrir, which many observers judge to have been expanding its support base in Kyrgyzstan recently, partly in response to local governments' involvement in the global 'War on Terror'. Many experts believe that the best way for Central Asian governments to combat Islamic radical groups is not through repression but through the pursuit of economic reforms and political liberalisation and engaging groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir in dialogue. If Hizb ut-Tahrir entered mainstream politics, they argue, its popularity could suffer as it faced the practical task of tackling social and economic problems. In his article in this issue of RSS

Emmanuel Karagiannis examines the place and role of Hizb ut-Tahrir in the Kyrgyz social and political scene, and applies three theories of social movement in order better to understand the Hizb ut-Tahrir phenomenon: 'structural-functional theory', 'resource mobilisation theory' and 'political opportunities theory'.

In China, the religious scene continues to astonish with its complexity. In her article in this issue Susan McCarthy describes the Hui Muslim minority in the province of Yunnan as it struggles to retain or assert its spiritual and social 'authenticity'. One basic choice facing Muslim minorities in China is whether to try to defend themselves from the secular, modernising, non-Muslim society that surrounds them, or whether to promote an engaged, 'civil' Islam, looking back to previous generations of Muslim scholars, writers, officials and military leaders who were as immersed and proficient in the Confucian, Republican or Communist Chinese cultures of their day as they were in Islam. Obviously the Chinese state has an interest in this debate, and in shaping the direction of the Islamic revival. In the Hui case, McCarthy argues that 'with regard to identity, tradition and practice, the state seeks to construct as well as constrain, promote as well as prohibit'. Again, the context of the global 'War on Terror' is relevant, argues McCarthy: it has provided the Chinese state with an excuse to crack down on Islamic activities that it deems troublesome, with little if any condemnation from abroad; and she wonders how far the desire on the part of Muslim minority groups in China to construct an existence apart from mainstream society stems from a self-protective impulse.

What of the future for religion in China? In his article in this issue, Kim-kwong Chan surveys the current religious scene and official religious policy, and looks at four patterns for the future, any one of which China might choose or be constrained to follow, and which will have very different outcomes as far as religion is concerned. The four scenarios are combinations of two possible patterns of social and economic transition ('rough' and 'smooth') with two possible patterns of state religious policy ('restrictive' and 'reform'). He finds that the scenarios suggest that a continuation of the current 'restrictive' policy on religion would produce negative consequences when combined with both the socio/economic variants ('rough' and 'smooth' transitions), but that if the government adopted a 'reform' policy, 'religion would be able to play a positive role even in the worst case of social transition'. (It seems natural to believe that this prediction would hold good for other areas we study: Russia; Central Asia). 'It would take tremendous courage to effect a religious policy change of this magnitude,' suggests Chan; but in China, he notes, we should always be ready to 'expect the unexpected'.

Notes on Contributors

John Basil, now retired, was professor of Slavic history at the University of South Carolina for 30 years. His early work was on the Russian revolutionary movement. He has published articles on church and state in Russia in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* and *Church History*. His book on church-state relations in late imperial Russia is to be published soon. He is now working on a book on church, state and religious thought in postsoviet Russia, concentrating at the moment on two themes: controversy in Russia over the teaching of religion in state schools; and discussion among Russian religious journalists and intellectuals about the future of church and religious life in Europe and Russia.

Janice Broun, an Oxford graduate, is a specialist writer on religion in communist and postcommunist societies. She has had several articles published on Bulgarian religious affairs since the early 1980s, and book reviews on a wide variety of aspects of religious life in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly on martyrs and confessors in the former Soviet Union. She is the author of *Conscience and Captivity: Religion in Eastern Europe* (1988) and of six contributions to *Censorship: an International Encyclopedia* (London, Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001).

Stanislaw Burdziej, 25, obtained his master's degree in sociology at Nicolas Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. He is working for a doctorate at the same university, focusing on the relations between politics and religion in the United States. In 2004–05 he holds a Schurman Scholarship at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies in Germany. His research interests include the sociology and anthropology of religion, with special regard to pilgrimages, as well as church-state relations. He has published several reviews and articles on these issues in various journals including *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* and *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny*.

Kim-kwong Chan has a PhD from Ottawa and a Pontifical DTh from St Paul. He is currently the executive secretary at the Hong Kong Christian Council and honorary research fellow at the Universities Service Center for China Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is the author or coauthor of nine books, mostly on religion in China, including *Towards a Contextual Ecclesiology* (1987), *Protestantism in Contemporary China* (1993) with Alan Hunter and *Witnesses for The Power of God* (2000) with Tetsunao Yamamori. A tenth book, coauthored with Eric Carlson, *Religious Freedom in China: Policy, Administration and*, is due to appear in 2005. He is an ordained minister of the Christian National Evangelism Commission (CNEC) East Asia Field, and a justice of the peace appointed by the Hong Kong SAR government.

Emmanuel Karagiannis obtained his PhD in politics from the University of Hull in Great Britain. He has taught international relations in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Pennsylvania. He has written extensively on Turkish foreign policy, energy geopolitics in the Caucasus, political Islam in Central Asia and terrorism. He is the author of the book *Energy and Security in the Caucasus* (London, RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

Susan McCarthy is an assistant professor of political science at Providence College, Rhode Island, USA, where she teaches comparative and Asian politics. She received her PhD from the University of California at Berkeley in 2001. Her research focuses on Chinese politics, in particular the politics of minority culture, religion and national identity. Her articles have appeared in *Asian Ethnicity*, *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* and *China: an International Journal*.